

Does It Stack? (Part Two)

By Skip Williams

Let's get started with the Armor Class of the example character now!

Armor Class

Our example character has a wealth of Armor Class improvements:

- +7 armor bonus (*+2 chainmail*)
- +2 shield bonus (heavy shield)
- +1 deflection bonus (*ring of protection +1*)
- +2 natural armor (*barkskin* spell)
- +2 Dexterity bonus (the character's Dexterity is 17, thanks to the *cat's grace* spell, but chainmail allows only a +2 Dexterity bonus to Armor Class, says Table 7-6 in the *Player's Handbook*).
- +4 armor bonus (*mage armor* spell)
- +4 shield bonus (*shield* spell)
- +2 deflection bonus (*shield of faith* spell)

That's a lot of bonuses, but all the bonuses with the same names overlap, so we're left with the following:
+7 armor bonus (*+2chainmail*)

- +2 natural armor (*barkskin* spell)
- +2 bonus from Dexterity (from the *cat's grace* spell, as limited by the chainmail)
- +4 shield bonus (*shield* spell)
- +2 deflection bonus (*shield of faith* spell)

That's a total bonus of +17 to Armor Class, giving our example human (who has a base Armor Class of 10 with no size adjustment) an Armor Class of 27.

Please note a couple of things here:

Multiple Enhancement Bonuses: The character is effectively getting two enhancement bonuses to Armor Class (from the *+2 chainmail* and the *barkskin* spell), and that works in this case because those two bonuses are being applied to two different elements of the character's Armor Class.

Where Enhancement Bonuses Apply: In general, an enhancement bonus goes with a specific item a character uses, or with one of the user's abilities or other statistics. The example character's touch Armor Class is only 14, because a touch attack bypasses the character's armor bonus (including the +2 from the magic armor), natural armor bonus (including the +2 from the *barkskin* spell), and shield bonus. Those enhancement bonuses don't float around the character, warding off harm; they improve a specific aspect of the character's defenses.

Overlapping Bonuses are Still in Place: This can become significant when dealing with Armor Class. For example, our human has an Armor Class of 24 against an incorporeal touch attack, as follows:

- Base 10
- +2 Dexterity: The chainmail's Dexterity cap still applies, even though the chainmail itself can't block the attack.
- +4 shield bonus: The *shield* spell works against the attack because it is a force effect.
- +4 armor bonus: The *mage armor* spell works against the attack because it is a force effect. (But, neither the chainmail's +2 enhancement bonus nor the *barkskin*'s +2 enhancement bonus improve the *mage armor*'s armor bonus.)
- +2 deflection bonus from *shield of faith* spell.

Coming in Part Three of Does It Stack?

Skip goes over the attack bonus, Reflex save, and jumping possibilities of the example character.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and has been the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* since 1986. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (his borscht gets rave reviews).

©1995-2003 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Wizards is headquartered in Renton, Washington, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057.

Based on the original **Dungeons & Dragons®** game by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and on the new edition of the **Dungeons & Dragons** game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison. **D&D, Dungeons & Dragons, and Forgotten Realms** are registered trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All Wizards characters, character names, and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This material is protected under the laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction of or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This product is a work of fiction. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, places, or events is purely coincidental. This Wizards of the Coast game product contains no Open Game Content. No portion of this work may be reproduced in any form without written permission. To learn more about the Open Gaming License and the d20 System License, please visit www.wizards.com/d20. ©2001-2004 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All rights reserved. Made in the U.S.A.

Visit our website at www.wizards.com/dnd